

Dudley Domestic Homicide Review 1 Local Learning Briefing

Who should read this?

Any practitioner or manager within the Borough who works with adults. It will also be of interest to individuals that work with children, young people and their families due to the impact of domestic abuse on those that witness and experience domestic abuse within the household and Childrens Services involvement in this "case".

Background information

This domestic homicide review concerns the death of the victim, a 54 year old, white British¹ woman and mother of four grown-up children, who was brutally killed in December, 2015 by her husband as she made plans to leave him.

Her husband was found guilty of her murder and sentenced to life imprisonment but committed suicide on the one year anniversary of the murder. In summing up the criminal case, the judge highlighted the particular ferocity of the attack and the callous lack of empathy displayed by the perpetrator.

Key Areas of Learning Identified

Whilst the victim and her husband had little contact with agencies in recent years, this domestic homicide review has identified a number of areas where adoption of good practice could promote a more effective response to victims of domestic violence and abuse. The learning from this review is not limited to the agencies that were directly involved but extends to all agencies where there may be contacts with victims of domestic violence and abuse.

Missed opportunities for enquiry

Health agencies have a key role in the early identification and response to domestic abuse. This review has shown that the GP Practice remains both a trusted and universal service, ideally placed to recognise indicators of abuse and guide those experiencing domestic abuse into early help. The IRIS Programme has provided the critical evidence base for how primary care can most effectively be this conduit to safety and support.

Likewise, Emergency Departments are well placed to respond to those experiencing domestic abuse at the point of crisis but need to have the systems and protocols in place to be able to do this effectively, such as seeing patients displaying potential indicators of domestic abuse in private. A Hospital IDVA is now in place at Russells Hall Hospital.

Alcohol Misuse as a Potential Indicator of Domestic Abuse

This review has considered how women experiencing domestic abuse will frequently misuse alcohol as a means to cope with the domestic abuse that they are experiencing. At the same time, alcohol is becoming known as a common feature in domestic abuse related deaths.

¹ White British is an ethnicity classification used in the 2011 United Kingdom Census

Community Awareness of Domestic Abuse

This review found that domestic violence and abuse is still commonly defined as physical violence and that controlling and coercive behaviour is rarely understood as domestic abuse by communities.

Overview Recommendations for Safe and Sound, Dudley's Community Safety Partnership

Recommendation 1:

Adoption of Primary Care Early Intervention Programme. Dudley Community Safety Partnership should work with Dudley Clinical Commissioning Group to promote the take-up of domestic abuse early intervention programmes, such as *IRIS*, across its GP practices.

Recommendation 2:

Meeting NICE Quality Standard on Domestic Violence and Abuse QS116. The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust should report to Dudley Community Safety Partnership on its progress to meet this quality standard on a regular basis until each are satisfied that the standard is met.

Recommendation 3:

Raising Awareness of the Links between Alcohol Misuse and Domestic Abuse. Dudley Community Safety Partnership should explore how the links between alcohol misuse and domestic abuse can be promoted across agencies in Dudley to enable early identification of potential abuse and effective pathways for protection and support.

Recommendation 4:

Raising Awareness of Coercive Control. Dudley Community Safety Partnership should raise awareness of coercive control amongst its communities and specifically target key messages to the family and friends of those experiencing abuse.

More information

To access the full report and Executive Summary, including individual agency recommendations please visit: <https://www.dudleysafeandsound.org/ourwork>

For more information in respect of Domestic Abuse please visit our helphub: <https://www.dudleysafeandsound.org/help-hub>